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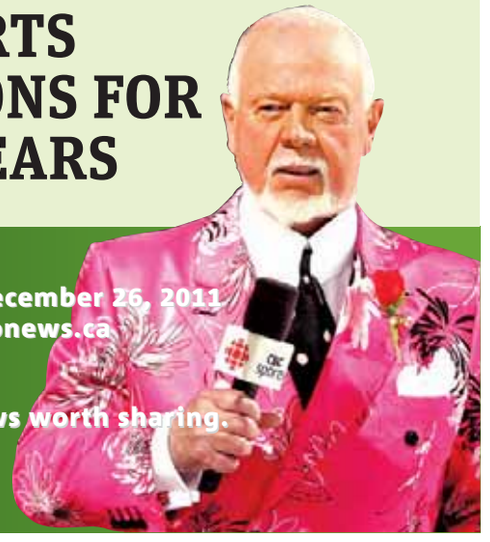
{page 40}



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2012 If it's your last year on Earth, how will you live it?

@BlackCatCont: Finally found the man to spend my life with so I am gonna Marry him!!

@recordscratcher: I think I'll start smoking. And, running with scissors. Maybe even start flossing my teeth, but, that's a lot to ask.

@seanydoyle: I blew my "end of days" budget back in 1999. My Netscape stock is still good though, right? #solidplan

@kelseyhip: Live to the fullest and on Dec. 31 dance around in my Christmas onesie, drinking red wine & waiting for the fireworks to begin

@m_candy: I would aim to create breathtaking memories which includes exhilarating adventures and travel + spend more time w/ family

@mcelmon: better not be! I plan on traveling at the end of next year :)

@desireadawn: savouring the little moments through mindfulness

@russellabird: I would quit twitter so I can do things that actually matter #scotch #family #scotch

@NoIAmChuck: Until the end of May, I will finish my last semester of school. After that, watch Preppers go crazy hoarding stuff. :)

@BlackCatCont: Fill it with "experiences" try anything in order to grow and above all take pictures Share time with friends and Family LAUGH

@CitizenWilliams: I would sell everything I own and live out my remaining days in Guam.

@nadiaadelle: I would spend as much time as possible with family and friends! And travel as often as I could!

@gldngrl403: omelette 4 breakfasts/burgers 4 lunches/indian food 4 dinners

@marklewis2009: No different than I do today, live for the day, live for love and live for life, no regrets no sorrow and no stress

@henteko_mai: Just let me watch 'The Dark Knight Rises' and 'The Avengers,' then I'd be ok. :)

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End of the world, or a new era?

With just under a year to go to Dec. 21, 2012, experts say there's no reason to fear the end is nigh ◐ Mayan calendar doesn't mark the apocalypse, they say, but rather the end of a more than 5,000-year era

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS
@METRONEWS.CA
METRO CANADA IN VANCOUVER

Doomsday is doomed.

So say experts, who want to dispel a widespread belief that the ancient Mayans predicted Dec. 21, 2012 to be the last day for all humankind.

Jaymie Matthews, an astronomer and astrophysicist at the University of B.C., said the date simply marks the end of a 5,126-year era in the "long count" Mayan calendar.

This calendar system records how many days have passed since Aug. 11, 3114 BC, the day believed to be the date of creation.

But the Mayans weren't warning future generations about an impending gloom and doom just because they didn't make any physical records of their calendar that went past the first long count, Matthews points out.

"Why would you ever make a calendar that starts on the second long count, which won't start for a couple thousand years after you were dead and buried?" he asks.

Matthews says it would take a Mayan astronomer at least 10 months to carve a calendar pattern on a huge piece of stone.

"There wasn't a point in making and going through the effort of making a calendar that would cover the second long count and would absolutely be of no use to anybody because nobody was going to be alive."

Justin Jennings, lead curator of the exhibition Maya: Secrets of their Ancient World at the Royal Ontario Museum, agrees that the Mayan calendar doesn't predict the end of the world but a transition into a new era.

"For the Maya, the idea was a cycle of time would end in December, but the next day a new cycle would begin," he says.

"(It's like) when you throw out your old calendar, it doesn't mean the world ends. You get a new one."

The source of the frenzy: The Mayan calendar

ISTOCK ILLUSTRATION

Matthews says if anything bad happens to the world, it's not going to be anything the Mayans foresaw.

"If something happens to the world on Dec. 21, 2012, it would be something we would do ourselves," he says.

There isn't the slightest reason to be worried, Matthews adds, as this would have been the super party of all time for the Mayans.

1 news

Metro asked

If the world were ending, and we needed the best and brightest so humanity could survive, who would you save? Out of the 412 panelists who answered, here are the three most popular picks:

U.S. President Barack Obama (17 times)

A doctor (14 times)

The Dalai Lama (12 times)

Metropolitan Panel

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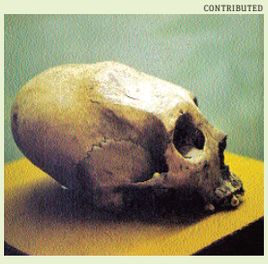
Mayan secrets revealed

Mayan people did not disappear ◐ There are 10 million Mayan people alive today ◐ Mayans communicated with their gods and ancestors to seek advice on decisions such as marriages, warfare, deaths and harvests

PHYLICIA TORREVILLAS
@METRONEWS.CA
METRO CANADA IN VANCOUVER

Justin Jennings, lead curator of the exhibition Maya: Secrets of their Ancient World at the Royal Ontario Museum, tells Metro why the Maya civilization is one of the most impressive in human history and sheds light on some of the most widespread myths about the ancient Maya.

CONTRIBUTED



BEAUTY

The ancient Mayans went to extreme lengths to transform their bodies through tattooing, face painting and body piercing. They did cranial modification where they wrapped up and tied boards to the heads of newborn babies to reshape the skull. They also filed their teeth.

CONTRIBUTED

CHOCOLATE

The cacao plant is from the part of the world where the Mayans lived — Mexico and parts of South America. It was an elite drink and only few people could get the chocolate. The nobles drank a mix of chocolate, corn and water, sometimes with chili. Instead of a sweet drink, it would be bitter, spicy and foamy, like a cappuccino.

JORGE PEREZ DE LARA/ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

BLOODLETTING

Piercing the skin and allowing the blood to flow was carried out to communicate with gods and ancestors for advice. They would prick the skin with a stingray spine, bone or rock and collect the blood in a pot with cotton cloth and burn it. A vision serpent would appear in the flames.

JUSTIN JENNINGS/ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

MISCONCEPTIONS

Maya culture is not dead. There are 10 million Mayan people today. Many of their city-states and the idea of the sacred rulers that organized these cities died out. Maya is not an empire. It was never unified by a single governing body, but made up of numerous independent city-states with a common culture.

If only there were an undo button on life

It's so hard to get it right when it comes to love and money.

The two were at the top of people's do-over lists when Metro asked members of the Metropolitan Panel to assume that the world is ending and to choose one thing they'd like another crack at.

Apparently, one panelist would like to "crack" her husband.

"I would never marry the a**hole I've been married to for the past 22 years! God, how I hate his guts."

Aside from choice of partner, people also regretted the timing of their marriage.

"Not marry so young and finish college," one panelist wrote.

"I wouldn't have gotten married at 18, would have finished school and been a paralegal," said another.

Yet, many of the 382 respondents said they wish they hadn't waited so long.

"Realize my husband was the one for me many years sooner," one anonymous participant said.

Money was the other popular do-over choice.

"Spend less and save more, at least 10 per cent of every paycheque. No excuses," one person said.

For every saver, there was a spender.

"Spend every penny I have and have a blast!"

Either way, the smartest answer was probably this one: "Buy shares in Apple and Google."

Speaking of smarts, a number of respondents said they'd like the chance to go back to school. Some said they like their career chioce, but wish it paid more. Others said they hate what they do, but the money is so nice.

And while a number of people said they would have had more sex, 33 said thanks, but no thanks to change. They're happy with the choices they've made.

"All the tough stuff has made me into the person I am today," one person said.

"Every poor choice and failure is an opportunity to learn and grow," another added. FERNANDO CARNEIRO

To join the panel, visit metropolitanpanel.ca

Survey do-overs

- I never would have plucked my eyebrows to the point of extinction.
- (I would) come back as Arnold Schwarzenegger.
- Marry Tom Brady.
- I wouldn't have kissed that guy Halloween 2010. It nearly ruined my relationship and because of it my husband is no longer friends with someone he was close to.

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Apocalypse you say? Bring it on!

We asked Calgarians, if the world were coming to an end, where in Calgary would you want to be? Some of our brave respondents would fight to survive, or dance the night away

Ted Henley, co-host of Breakfast Television

"If I was being practical, it would be the science centre (Telus Spark) because if you survive, not only will you be entertained, you could use all gadgets and gizmos to MacGyver anything. If you know it's going to end, it would also be pretty cool to be on top of the Calgary Tower because you could watch it."

Cheryl Bernard, Olympic curler

Easy! I would be on or beside our Bow River. It's my "go to" place to relax and to reflect. It has some lifetime memories for me, so if the world was ending, I would be there with my husband and my dog!

Mayor Naheed Nenshi

Fortunately, the Calgary Fire Department and Calgary Police Service have provided me with a sword that hangs outside my office for just this situation. What? The sword is just ceremonial? We'll see who's laughing when I'm protecting city hall from the inevitable hoards of zombies, mutants, or whatever.

Chris Turner, author of The Leap: How to Survive & Thrive in the Sustainable Economy

I'd pack the family in the car and head out for a last meal — either at Los Mariachis on Macleod for chicken mole or at Los Compadres food truck for tacos al pastor. ... If you've got a protective shell of delectable mole and/or an umbrella made of homemade corn tortillas, you might have something enticing enough to bribe Ixtal into letting you pass on into Mayan paradise.

Kyle Shewfelt, Olympic gymnast

I would choose to ride out the apocalypse in one of two places: Local 510 with all of my closest friends and family, dancing around the giant table upstairs with a pint of Grasshopper. Or, Riverpark dog park with our pooch Cooper.

Epic travel and sex with strangers ... now guilt-free!

Travel seems to be the No. 1 item on most people's bucket lists, according to a Metropolitan Panel survey.

Of the 361 respondents, 98 said they would like to go on one last epic trip before time runs out.

"See the seven or eight Wonders of the World, and go visit the country where I was born," one panellist responded.

"Spend all my savings on a super vacation," another said.

Some were very specific. One wants to ride a Harley motorcycle across the Confederation Bridge, while another wants to go to the Playboy Mansion.

Which brings us to "more sex" — another popular answer.

And in the case of one panellist, not just any sex will do. It'll have to be "kinky sexual relations." Of note, "sex with a stranger" made the list five times.

And while a lot of people want to try scuba diving and sky diving at least once, many respondents said it doesn't matter how they spend their last year on Earth as long as it's with family.

FERNANDO CARNEIRO

To join the panel, visit metropolitanpanel.ca

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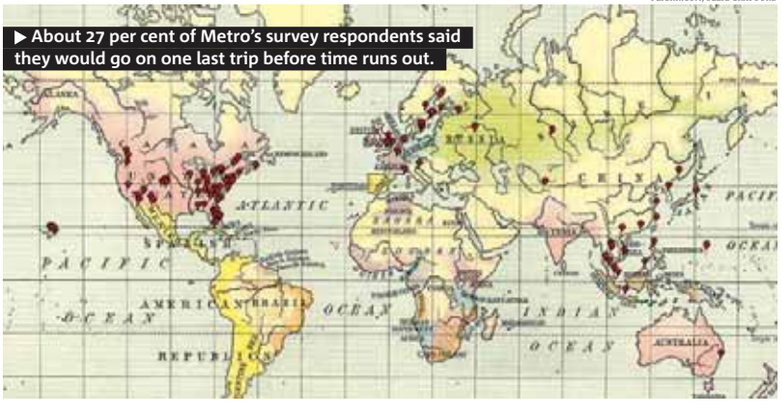

▶ About 27 per cent of Metro's survey respondents said they would go on one last trip before time runs out.

Cats and dogs

Random bucket-list items from the Metropolitan Panel survey:

- **Eat a meaty pizza.** "I'm a vegetarian. If I'm going, I might as well take a bunch of animals with me."
- **Meet an alien.**
- **Find my dog that was taken away from me.**
- **Go to an opera, in full formal, with my husband.**
- **Spend plenty of time with my cat.**

It was the best of times — for some of us

When it comes to the best day in our lives, it's the people around us who make it special, according to Metropolitan Panel members.

More than 200 respondents credited loved ones for their most special memories.

"The day I married my best friend, my husband," one panelist said.

"The day I met my wife, by happy accident. We met at a convention where we had both planned to leave early. I asked her for coffee and she said, 'No, thanks. I've had enough coffee today.' But, I persevered and asked her to go for dinner the next day."

The birth of children figured prominently.

"The two days my children were born," one said.

"The day my son was born. Nothing else comes close to that day," another added.

Some respondents were more into dogs.

"Getting my dog … she loves me no matter what," one person said.

Only two of the 390 respondents mentioned cats.

Secret deeds were behind a lot of memories, too.

"My last girls' night ... We did things our husbands shouldn't know or see," one person said.

"I went to an amusement park with the person I'm secretly in love with," another said.

Some responses were just sad.

"Birth. Everything has been downhill since then."

Another said, "Don't have one. Something always mucks it up. But that's life." FERNANDO CARNEIRO

Tom Cruise did it too

Best random response to the Metropolitan Panel survey:

- The best day is the one when I decided to go for braces at the age of 57.

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The new year, by the numbers

The world we know now will be changed forever, and numerology predicts 2012 will make it a better place

What is numerology?
Numbers have relationships with all things in nature, making them powerful symbolic expressions. Numerology is used to predict life, and the circumstances that surround it. It is often used to interpret a person's talents, traits and overall character throughout their destiny.

When one begins to understand the formula used behind numerology, they begin to unlock the deepest secrets in their life and quite possibly in the lives of others.

Breaking down the digits
One important thing to remember when using numerology is that the numerical digits need to be broken down to a single digit in order to decipher the predictable outcome of what you are seeking.

For example, take the year 2012. Broken down it equals 2+0+1+2 = 5.

So, the influence for the year 2012 will be based upon the expression of the number five.

The power of five
Five itself has a powerful meaning — full of wild primitive adventure and unexpected exciting events.

The number five influence enhances freewill and self-expression. This means that during 2012, individuals will be living life their way. People who have been putting off projects, important decisions, loved ones or even a vacation will now make the time to accomplish the things that are overdue.

While seeking their highest goals and chasing their dearest dreams, as they bounce from one unique experience to the next, during 2012 most people will freely share their emotions and thoughts with the world. With this number-five influence, many people in the world will desire to use social outlets, ultimately as a tool to connect with the world.

Money-wise
Folks will take finances to a more serious level, and although they may not save as much money as they would like to, eventually their spending habits will change, and wiser choices will be made regarding their budget. People will start to get stingy with their cash, spending on only the best deal ... but the competition will be good for business and the consumer will benefit.

Lessons to be learned
Yes, the year 2012 will be somewhat unpredictable with all the frequent changes that five imposes, but 2012 will be a memorable year, packed with valuable lessons which people will learn to live by.

The world is not ending, but it is becoming a better place.

CERISE FAIRFAX (NUMEROLOGIST)

2012: 5 positives

1. Taking the initiative to create friendships
2. Love connections
3. Reconciliation
4. Mental/emotional balance
5. Expression of self

2012: 5 negatives

1. Challenges
2. Overreacting
3. Heightened sensitivity
4. Self-centredness
5. Controlling

11 Critical Home Inspection Traps to be Aware of Weeks Before Listing Your Home for Sale

Calgary, AB - According to industry experts, there are over 33 physical problems that will come under scrutiny during a home inspection when your home is for sale. A new report has been prepared which identifies the eleven most common of these problems, and what you should know about them before you list your home for sale.
Whether you own an old home or a brand new one, there are a number of things that can fall short of requirements during a home inspection. If not identified and dealt with, any of these 11 items could cost you dearly in terms of repair. That's why it's critical that you read this report before you list your home. If you wait until the building inspector flags these issues for you, you will almost certainly experience costly delays in the close of your home sale or, worse, turn prospective buyers away altogether. In most cases, you can make a reasonable pre-inspection yourself if you know what you're looking for, and knowing what you're looking for can help you prevent little problems from growing into costly and unmanageable ones.
To help homesellers deal with this issue before their homes are listed, a free report entitled "11 Things You Need to Know to Pass Your Home Inspection" has been compiled which explains the issues involved.
To order a FREE Special Report, visit www.InspectionProofYourHome.com
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Mexican city starts a countdown to 'doomsday'

A city in southern Mexico wants to live each moment as if it were the last.

Tourism officials in Tapachula have installed a digital clock to count down the time left before the Dec. 21, 2012, solstice, when some believe the world will end.

The clock was set to start Dec. 21, a year before the supposed apocalypse.

Chiapas state tourism regional director Manolo Alfonso Pinot said Dec. 16 that Mayan priests would perform a ceremony at the nearby archaeological site of Izapa.

Maya experts say the doomsday fears are a misreading of Maya stone inscriptions that mention the date, saying the Mayans only considered it the end of one calendar cycle and the beginning of another.

Pinot said he doesn't believe the world will end, but looks at it as a sort of beginning, in the business sense at least.

"A lot of people know they can fill their body with energy if they come to these exceptional sites," he said. "If people are interested, we have to take advantage of this."

Tapachula, best known as a gritty border town crossed by Central American migrants en route to the United States, is not a popular Mayan tourism destination. But nearby Izapa is a place where many stelae have been found, including the "Tree of Life" stone discovered in the 1950s and thought to convey an ancient Mayan tale.

At Izapa, close to the Tajumulco volcano, Pinot says a Mesoamerican ball court, a carved stone and the throne of the Izapa ruler face a straight line that on Dec. 21, 2012, is expected to align with the planets.

"It is hard to say what you will be able to see that day," he said.

The doomsday theories stem from a pair of tablets that describe the return of a Mayan god at the end of a 13th period of 400 years, which falls on Dec. 21, 2012.

Experts say the date marks the end of a 5,126-year cycle that began in 3114 BC, and the start of another.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLES DHARAPAK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

▶ Former U.S. president George W. Bush, centre, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, right, and former Mexican president Vicente Fox walk on the stone stairs of the Kukulcan Pyramid as they tour Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza in 2006.

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Five doomsday prediction flops

As the end of yet another year draws near, we take a look back at various end-of-days prophecies we've lived to reminisce about

STEVE COLLINS
CALGARY@METRONEWS.CA
METRO CANADA IN OTTAWA

Although some people believe ancient Mayans predicted the end of the world on Dec. 21, 2012, in reality our mass extinction has been greatly exaggerated many times before.

Check out the top five failed apocalypse predictions ranging from death by comet to the second coming of Christ.

MAY 21, 2011 (ALSO, OCT. 21, 2011 AND SEPT. 6, 1994)

Harold Camping of the Family Radio Ministry was the top doomsayer of 2011, a year in which he predicted the Rapture and world-ending earthquakes not once but twice.

Camping and his followers spend a reported $100 million on a campaign of billboards, broadcast ads and RVs to publicize the impending May 21 cataclysm.

When the world failed to dematerialize in May, Camping, amid worldwide mockery, rescheduled the apocalypse for Oct. 21, which also, as many noticed, did not come to pass.

The elderly California preacher had previously fixed the world's best-before date as Sept. 6, 1994, which had the same uncanny degree of accuracy.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ A bus drives by a banner announcing the end of the world.

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LAURA RAUCH/FILE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Warren Jeffs appears in a courtroom in Las Vegas in Aug. 2006.

JAN. 1, 2005

Warren Jeffs, polygamist head of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, put police in three countries on high alert, the Vancouver Sun reported, when he advised members in Bountiful, B.C., the U.S. and Mexico to stay in their homes on New Year's Eve to await the apocalypse and ascension to heaven. The police worried about the possibility of a mass suicide by church members. Fortunately, both Jeffs' prediction and police suspicions were unfounded.

JAN. 1, 2000 (AND MAY 5, 2000)

While there were many predictions of the End of Days in 2000, these were overshadowed by dire warnings of death by technical difficulties. The Y2K bug, in some of the worst-case scenarios, would cause deadly computer glitches, resulting in planes falling from the sky or launches of nuclear weapons. Even after New Year's came, we were still doomed, at least according to Richard Noone's book, 5/5/2000 Ice: The Ultimate Disaster. He predicted we'd be wiped out by another ice age on May 5.

DON RYAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ U.S. officials at a Y2K drill.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Marshall Applewhite

MARCH 1997

The appearance of the Hale-Bopp comet inspired the 1997 mass suicide of 39 members of the Heaven's Gate Cult. The members, led by Marshall Applewhite, believed that all life on Earth would soon be wiped out. The only way to survive, they surmised, was to leave their physical bodies behind and hitch a ride on an alien spaceship they believed was travelling behind the comet. Applewhite and his followers were found lying in their bunk beds in their rented mansion.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1982

Colourful and controversial televangelist Pat Robertson won a satirical Ig Nobel Prize for mathematics this year for predicting Armageddon in late 1982, sparked by a Russian invasion of Israel.

Robertson, a former Republican presidential candidate, shared the prize with a host of other well-known bad guessers, including Dorothy Martin (who predicted a 1954 Doomsday) and Elizabeth Clare Prophet (1990) for "teaching the world to be careful when making mathematical assumptions and calculations."

GENE J. PUSKAR/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Pat Robertson

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Hey, it could happen...

Metro lists three events that may happen in 2012, and would change the way we live There's reason to fear a new war in the Middle East and collapse of the euro Will soccer's governing body stop ignoring new technology?

1

Iran attacked

"The United States has launched a missile attack on Iran's uranium centrifuges near the city of Natanz. The Americans, backed by the United Kingdom, France and Israel, acted after IAEA inspectors were repeatedly blocked from entering the Natanz facility. While Iran claims it's developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, the international community suspects it's secretly developing nuclear weapons. With the massive bombing of Natanz, the West intends once and for all to eliminate Iran's nuclear capabilities."

▶ Iranian anti-aircraft system at work.

The attack hasn't happened, but something similar may very well occur in 2012. But while it would set Iran's nuclear ambitions back, it may also trigger an armed conflict. Since Iran is far from well-liked among its neighbours, the conflict would be unlikely to spread to other countries.

But the United States, even if supported by Israel and other allies, could ill afford another war.

2

Euro collapses

Good news, all of you who've kept D-mark, Francs and Lire in your drawers: You'll be able to use them again. The bad news: Your countries — the 17 nations in the eurozone — will plunge into an unprecedented purgatory of financial collapse and bureaucracy.

The euro, Europe's proudest achievement and the most visible sign that the continent is committed to a peaceful future, has failed. Government, banks, companies, even private individuals, in the eurozone and around the world will have to painfully disentangle their activities from the past decade. National currencies will re-emerge significantly weakened."

The collapse of the euro is a real possibility next year, and it's exactly what Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy, even David Cameron, want to avoid. Even if their citizens nostalgically remember the D-mark and the Franc as stable currencies and don't see the point of sacrificing to bail Greece out, the eurozone leaders know that the single currency is beyond the point of no return. If the euro fails, the world may face a new Great Depression.

3

FIFA accepts goal-line technology in football

After a hundred years of pretending that technology doesn't exist, soccer's governing body may vote to use goal-line technology to decide on the most crucial moments in the game. The International Football Association Board is expected to make the decision in March; it will be introduced in August with the beginning of the English Premier League's new season.

The English have been the leading proponents of this step, after Frank Lampard's goal in 2010 World Cup game against Germany was erroneously disallowed. What's more, the system selected will probably be made by the British firm Hawk-Eye (another version is provided by the German company Cairos).

The system has to be fast and simple. It will not replace referees but help them with goal-line decisions by giving them an answer within 0.5 seconds of the supposed goal happening. Forget long breaks of watching replays on your TV screen.

How it will influence the game? It could pave the way towards new inventions (checking offside seems to a safe choice), make the game more fair but also a bit boring. Referees' errors have added unpredictability — even excitement — to the game.

ELISABETH BRAW, MWN

▶ The loan sharks are feeding on countries in debt. The euro could be next.

▶ Hey computer! If you had one more eye, you'd be a cyclops!

How to Sell Your House Without An Agent

Calgary, AB - If you've tried to sell your home yourself, you know that the minute you put the "For Sale by Owner" sign up, the phone will start to ring off the hook. Unfortunately, most calls aren't from prospective buyers, but rather from every real estate agent in town who will start to hound you for your listing.

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Fall of civilizations

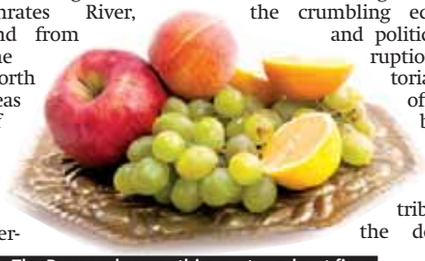
In order to remain world champs, empires need effective governance, vast financial resources and cutting-edge technology. Score a three out of three on those counts and you can be a top dog, but lose one peg and the throne will begin to teeter.

Roman Empire: 27 BC to 476 AD

If the Romans wrote a This Land is My Land song it'd go something like this: "From the Moors of Scotland out to the Tigris and Euphrates River, and from the North Seas of Germany to the sands of the Sahara, hail Caesar." The Romans gave us sanitation and spectator sports, aqueducts, irrigation and fine wine.

How they collapsed: In the end, the bread and circuses could no longer disguise the crumbling economy and political corruption. Historians often debate the root cause, attributing the downfall to everything from decadent lifestyle choices to rampant lead poisoning.

Lesson learned: Whether you're an empire or a runway model, spread yourself too thin, and you will collapse.



▶ The Romans knew a thing or two about fine food and wine

Ottoman Empire: 1299-1922

In its heyday in the 16th century, during the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent, a.k.a. Suleyman the Lawgiver, this Turkish empire's lands encompassed a wide swath of southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, with Constantinople as the capital. The Ottomans gave us Turkish baths, belly dancers, and of course the ottoman.

How they collapsed: While it was hit with the Sick Man of Europe label back in the mid-1800s, the empire would completely unravel during the First World War as the Ottomans allied themselves with the wrong side and lost the war.

Lesson learned: As Rihanna knows, getting a diverse audience to stand under your umbrella isn't the challenge — it's keeping them there.

FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

▶ Legendary Russian goalie Vladislav Tretiak

USSR (Soviet Empire): 1917-1989

In addition to blanketing mother Russia, the Soviet spectre shone on an array of satellite states including East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Cuba and North Korea. The Soviets gave us gulags, the KGB and Vladislav Tretiak — a goalie so great that even the top Canadian snipers of the day had trouble finding his five-hole.

How they collapsed: Because of what Sylvester Stallone said at the end of Rocky IV: "During this fight, I've seen a lot of changing.... In here, there were two guys killing each other, but I guess that's better than 20 million. I guess what I'm trying to say, is that if I can change, and you can change, everybody can change!"

Lesson learned: Turns out Gordon Gekko was right: "Greed is good."

BRENT STIRTON/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Machu Picchu

Inca Empire: 1438-1533

At their height, the Incas ruled Western South America with their powerseat in Peru, and their territory reaching portions of modern day Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile and Columbia. Their sophisticated mortar-free construction gave us Machu Picchu and introduced us to the intoxicating narcotic properties of the coca plant.

How they collapsed: Spanish conquistadors led by Francisco Pizzaro conquered them with their superior artillery coupled with viral warfare via the smallpox they brought with them. It was a devastating one-two punch that would wipe out the Inca civilization.

Lesson learned: Worship the sun too long, and you will eventually get burned.

CONTRIBUTED

▶ The army in the epic film 300 prepares for battle.

Persian Empire: 550-330 BC

Spearheaded by Cyrus the Great, the multi-state Persian Empire incorporated Thrace, the lands bounded by the Tigris River and the Persian Gulf and eventually Egypt and Asia Minor. Their mammoth military taught us the importance of an enormous well-trained army. They're also responsible for breathtaking Achaemenid architecture behind such marvels as the palace of Persepolis.

How they collapsed: Alexander the Great's armies swept in and won decisively in the battle of Issus.

Lesson learned: Even the most ornate hand-woven rug can still be swept from under the biggest and baddest kingdom on the block.

Khmer Empire: 802-1431

This Southeast Asia powerhouse ruled over parts of modern-day Burma, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam with Angkor as its capital. Angkor was the one of the most impressive kingdoms of its day.

The city's intricate network of waterways was state of the art for the Middle Ages. Angkor was the world's largest pre-industrial urban settlement in the world.

How they collapsed: Following King Jayvaman VII's death in 1215, the prevailing wisdom was that things were already going downhill — by the time it was eventually raided by Thais in the 15th century, the empire was easy prey.

In recent years, scientific examination of archaeological records has concluded that prolonged droughts followed by years of heavy monsoons crippled the Khmer capital leaving it vulnerable to an invasion.

Lesson learned: Mother Nature always bats last.

MIKE DOIC

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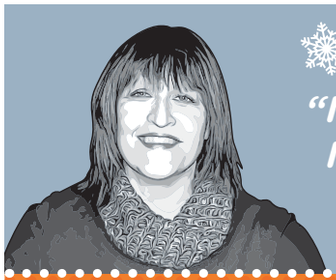

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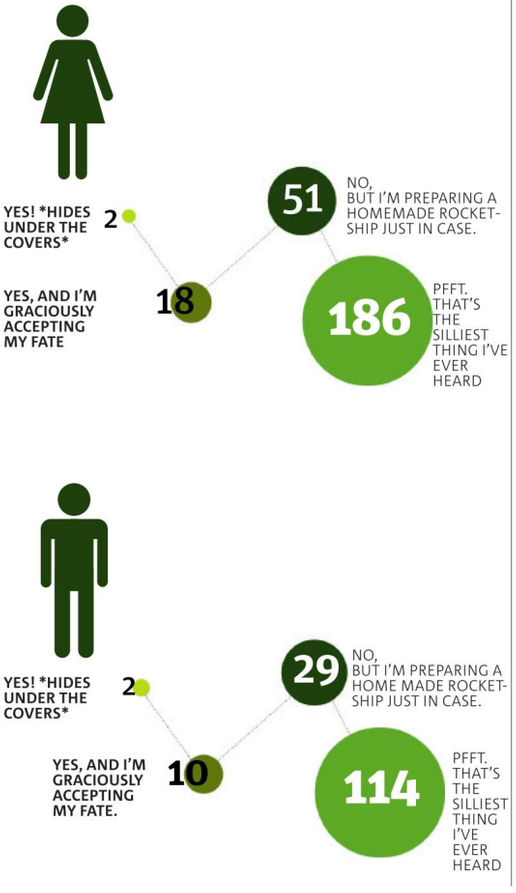
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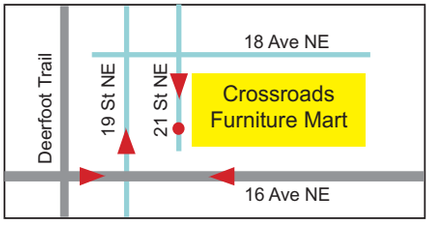


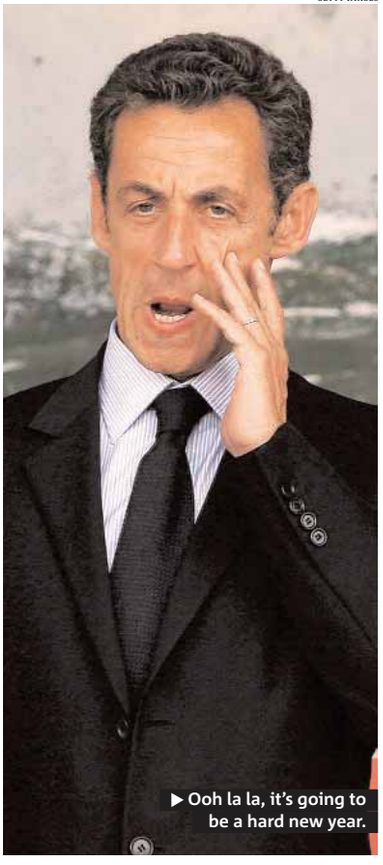
GETTY IMAGES

▶ "Gosh! For my next jubilee I must buy those killer high heels."

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Guess who will be the next Russian president?

GETTY IMAGES



▶ Ooh la la, it's going to be a hard new year.

GETTY IMAGES

▶ In this corner, Obama. In the other corner ... a Republican TBD.

WHAT 2012 WILL BRING

▶ Presidential elections in Russia, France and the U.S. ▶ London will stage the Summer Olympic Games ▶ World is waiting for doomsday ▶ Metro rounds up the biggest events that'll shape the world in an action-filled 2012

ELISABETH BRAW
CALGARY@METRONEWS.CA
METRO WORLD NEWS IN LONDON

1 Chinese New Year Puff, the Magic Dragon ... On Jan. 23 it's Chinese New Year, and this year belongs to the dragon. Fifteen days of celebrations will follow.

2 Jubilee of Elizabeth II When Princess Elizabeth became Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on Feb. 6, 1952, Britain was an empire that ruled large parts of the world. Sixty years later, Britain is no longer an empire; in fact, it's just a mid-size member of the E.U. The Queen, however, remains very popular. The country celebrates her 60 years on the throne with a series of special events any Royal fan will cherish.

3 Putin set for re-election On March 4, Vladimir Putin looks set to be elected the next president of Russia. Yes, it's a democratic election, but Putin is widely considered a shoo-in. Dmitry Medvedev, Putin's protégé who has served as president for the past four years, is billed to become prime minister.

4 Titanic's anniversary Was it too big to fail? On April 10, 1912, RMS Titanic set out on its maiden voyage, from Southampton to New York. But the luxury liner, known as the world's safest ship, sank when it hit an iceberg. Some 1,500 of the Titanic's 2,200 passengers were killed. On April 14, the 100th anniversary of the catastrophe, cruise ships will take visitors to the site where the Titanic sank.

5 Anti-Sarkozy Will the euro sink Nicolas Sarkozy? The French president faces voters at the polls on April 22. With disgraced IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn out of the race, Sarkozy's main challenger is François Hollande, a man so bland that he's turned it into his trademark. But with the euro in tatters, Hollande stands a good chance of winning.

6 Europe's feast of soccer On June 8, Europe's 16 leading soccer nations descend on Poland and Ukraine for Euro 2012. With a little bit of luck, the host countries will even be ready for the famous event. Delays have hampered the preparations, with UEFA chief Michel Platini threatening to move the championship to Germany.

7 Summer Olympics London is definitely ready for the Summer Olympics, which begins in London on July 27. London, which last hosted the games as a war-torn city in 1948, has been credited with impeccable planning and finishing construction of new arenas ahead of schedule.

8 Who will face Obama? It won't be Herman. Herman Cain, this year's surprise frontrunner for Republican candidate in the U.S. presidential election, has dropped out of the race. At their convention, which begins Sept. 1, Republicans will choose either Mitt Romney or Newt Gingrich as their candidate to take on Barack Obama. The Democrats will elect Obama as their presidential candidate two days later.

9 U.S. elections More drama for Obama. Barack Obama faces a surprisingly tough re-election on Nov. 6. Many Americans are disappointed with Obama, who won the goodwill of the whole nation — and much of the world — in the election more than three years ago.

10 The end of the world Arrivederci, folks. According to one interpretation of the Mayan calendar, the world will end on Dec. 21, 2012.

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2012 DOOMSDAY:

What would you do with one year to live?

If we could know for sure that the world would end on Dec. 21, 2012, what would you do with twelve months to live? Metro asked its newsdesk editors from around the world what they'd with one year to go

METRO CANADA, AMBER SHORTT

- Get caught kissing during a Vancouver riot. Come on, Canucks!
- Occupy a yurt. Any yurt.
- Build a bunker for three of my favourite Canadians: my sister, my niece and Ryan Gosling.
- Talk Richard Branson into giving me a free ride to space — then hijack the rocket and head to Kepler-22b.
- Get my picture in Metro Paris ... so I can go out in style.

METRO WORLD NEWS IN LONDON, ANTHONY JOHNSTON

- Coerce world leaders to make George Bush president of Earth: 12 months of hilarity!
- Heli-ski down the volcanoes of Kamchatka!
- Watch every episode of the Simpsons back-to-back in one week.
- Witness the aurora australis: aurora borealis is so overrated.
- Try all the world's culinary "delicacies" like fried tarantulas and fruit-bat soup: already ate scorpions and bees!

METRO HONG KONG, STANLEY LEUNG

- Tour the continents of the world that distribute Metro papers.
- Keep a few thousand U.S. dollars for daily expenditure — I'll donate the rest of my money to charity.
- Invite all my past and present "enemies" for a meeting of reconciliation so I'll have no regrets on Doomsday!
- Celebrate Metro HK's 10th anniversary.
- Fly to London and see Hong Kong's athletes compete for gold.

METRO COLOMBIA, GABRIEL MURILLO

- Dare I say it, I'd quit my job! With one year to go, it'll be high time to spend every moment with family and friends.
- I think travelling is a good idea. Make a trip to some exotic climates.
- If I just have one year to live, I'll try to be a kind person to people who need care. Like poor, old and disabled folks.
- Marry somebody!
- But at the same time who could say no to a few crazy nights of wild debauchery?!

METRO SWEDEN, JESSICA CARLESON

- Take Mum on an African safari. It's her dream and it's my wholehearted ambition to spoil my parents. Dad should come as well.
- Learn to tango properly in Buenos Aires. And possibly move there.
- Convince at least one racist about the value of equal rights and worth of all humankind.
- Learn to speak Spanish — even the dreaded subjunctive tense.
- I won't tell.... That's my little secret.

METRO MEXICO, GERMÁN CHÁVEZ MIRANDA

- Drive a race car: racing full throttle excites me.
- Visit Thailand to sample its authentic cuisine. I absolutely adore sweet and spicy food.
- Learn everything about Mexico: I'd hate to leave this world without knowing my homeland.
- See the midnight sun: normal for those near the North Pole, but I think it's one of Earth's greatest phenomena.
- Have a baby: I'd like to know what it's like to be a dad.

METRO RUSSIA, DMITRY LEMESHEVSKY

- I'd love to travel to the most remote inhabited place on Earth, the volcanic islands of Tristan da Cunha in the south Atlantic.
- Visit Cape Town and do a safari in South Africa.
- Learn to surf anywhere along Brazilian beaches.
- Watch Russia win the final of the Euro 2012 championships in Kiev.
- On Dec. 21, I'll take one of those space tourist flights. It'll be cool to see the end of the world from space.

METRO PORTUGAL, PATRÍCIA TADEIA

- See Portugal win the Euro 2012 — you know it's gonna happen!
- Interview and get to know surfing hunk Kelly Slater. This year he was just in front of me at a press conference.
- See Portugal get out of the financial crisis. We need to smile again!
- Travel to Bali and stay for a month or longer.
- Continue to make Metro the biggest world newspaper.

METRO CHILE, ANTONELLA GALARCE

- Record a video asking Ryan Gosling on a date and upload it to YouTube. Make it viral. Decide whether Ryan is prettier than a puppy.
- Do paragliding. I'm afraid of heights, but I've always wanted to know what it feels like to be a bird.
- Throw a beach party like it's 1999.
- Set up a nude activist movement for free education in Chile.
- Enjoy every moment with my loved ones.

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NEVER MIND THE ZOTZ, FOLKS: THIS IS NOT THE END

PAUL SULLIVAN
METRO

Another year, another year-end story. Yawn.

However: If you believe hundreds of books and 1,000-plus websites and blogs this will be the last year-end ever. Nothing boring about that.

The end really is near, they say. Dec. 21, 2012, to be precise. That's the day the Mayan "long count" calendar ends, and as the calendar outlasted the civilization, there are no Mayan calendar guys around to tell us what that means.

That hasn't prevented a parade of self-declared Mayan calendar experts from speculating that the world will end on that day, just shy of a year from now. For example, the movie 2012 featured a killer solar flare, a biblical flood, a really bad script and wooden performances. Scary.

That's the glass half-empty crowd. The half-full gang, starring people like bestselling really bad writer William Gladstone, author of The Twelve, prefer the New Age interpretation. "Greed and materialism will have a lesser role in this new era. There will be a greater emphasis on harmony among all living beings."

If you use that Prophety voice, it sounds more convincing.

There's more. For the first time in 26,000 years the centre of the Milky Way (our home galaxy) and our sun will be in alignment. How cool is that? Not to mention the fact that Dec. 21 is the winter solstice and witchy stuff happens on the solstice.

Finally, that glyph of a Porky Pig-like character on the calendar, going what appears to be "Duh-beeya-duhbeeya-duhbeeya that's all, folks" in Mayan is somewhat troubling.

JOSHUA TRUJILLO/SEATTLEPI.COM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

▶ Local atheists gathered at Dorky's Arcade in Tacoma, Wash., on May 21, 2011, the day that radio minister Harold Camping had predicted would be the beginning of the rapture.

Just kidding about the pig.

After extensive research (er, Google), I can authoritatively declare it's all a bunch of "zotz," which is Mayan for "bats," which is as close as I can get to "crazy."

The world will not end on Dec. 21 2012, say the usual humourless scientists from NASA, et cetera, any more than it will end on Dec. 31, 2011. Plus there's no way the Mayan astronomers could have known about that alignment of the sun and the galaxy thing. It's just a calendar, people. Get a life.

Before we go (but not for good!) let's raise a New Year's glass to Harold Camping, who, using his own zotz calendar, predicted the world would end on May 21, 2011, and when that didn't work, went all out for Oct. 21, 2011. That didn't work either, probably because he ignored the significance of the solstice, the equinox and reality in general.

Still, you never know. But to leave you on an upbeat note, John Cusack, the star of 2012, when asked what he would be doing on Dec. 21, 2012, replied: "Skiing."

Nothing zotz about him.

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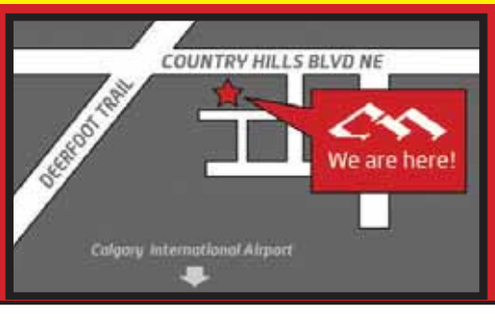

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2 scene

SUBMITTED

▶ Clockwise from top left: Charlton Heston in Omega Man; John Cusack in 2012; Sandra Oh in Last Night; Cillian Murphy in 28 Days Later

Armageddon at the box office

Filmmakers seem just as obsessed with the end of the world as the ancient Mayans were. It almost seems Hollywood could make post-apocalyptic movies until the end of the world comes for real. This week the Reel Guys have a look at our world ceasing to exist.

Scan this code or visit metronews.ca/scene for the latest in entertainment

Reel Guys

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End of times in film

Hollywood loves a good apocalypse

Here are some watchable worst-case scenarios

Richard: Mark, there are so many end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it movies out there it's hard to narrow it down, but I'll start our look at the end with Last Night. It's a dramedy about how people react in the hours before the destruction of the planet. My favourite part has David Cronenberg, in a rare appearance in front of the camera, as a utility company boss spending his final moments calling all his clients to offer thanks for their business.

Mark: Oh, Richard, I hated that movie. I found it twee and precious. Maybe I'm just an old-fashioned guy when it comes to the end of the world, but I want to see landmarks crumbling, a body count in the billions, explosions, tidal waves, and most importantly, a dad separated from his estranged wife and child who saves them, and his relationship. So, I liked 2012, even though I suspect the Mayans were numerically challenged. But I think it's important to differentiate between a natural apocalypse and one caused by alien invasion. Which do you – ahem – prefer?

RC: I'm more of a good old-fashioned apocalypse guy, although I'm also partial to super-plagues as well. At least on film. Omega Man, 28 Days Later and 12 Monkeys all have crazy viruses with the potential to wipe out mankind. One of the best epidemic movies is The Stand. It was made for TV, but doesn't skimp on the apocalyptica.

MB: Let me reverse my stand on my desire to see big special effects in these films. The Road is one of the scariest, most haunting movies about trying to survive an apocalypse I've ever seen. But then again, Independence Day has the White House blowin' up real good! I think there's an interesting double bill here, with two widely different takes on the topic.

RC: I have to say that one of the best apocalyptic movies didn't have anything to do with aliens or killer planets but with a very simple idea — mass infertility. There's few special effects and the White House is probably still standing at the end. It's more about great storytelling and a thought provoking idea.

MB: Children of Men? Brilliant. But when I was a little boy I saw On the Beach, set in Australia after a nuclear holocaust. Not one special effect, but I cried myself to sleep for months.

Top three

Richard's Picks:

1. On the Beach A dystopian drama starring Gregory Peck that set the date for the end of the world just after World War III in 1964.

2. Panic in Year Zero! Begins with one of filmdom's great understatements. "We've had it, haven't we dad?" as a mushroom cloud rises in the background.

3. Rock & Rule is an animation set on a devastated planet where a rock star tries to rule what's left of the world.

Mark's Picks

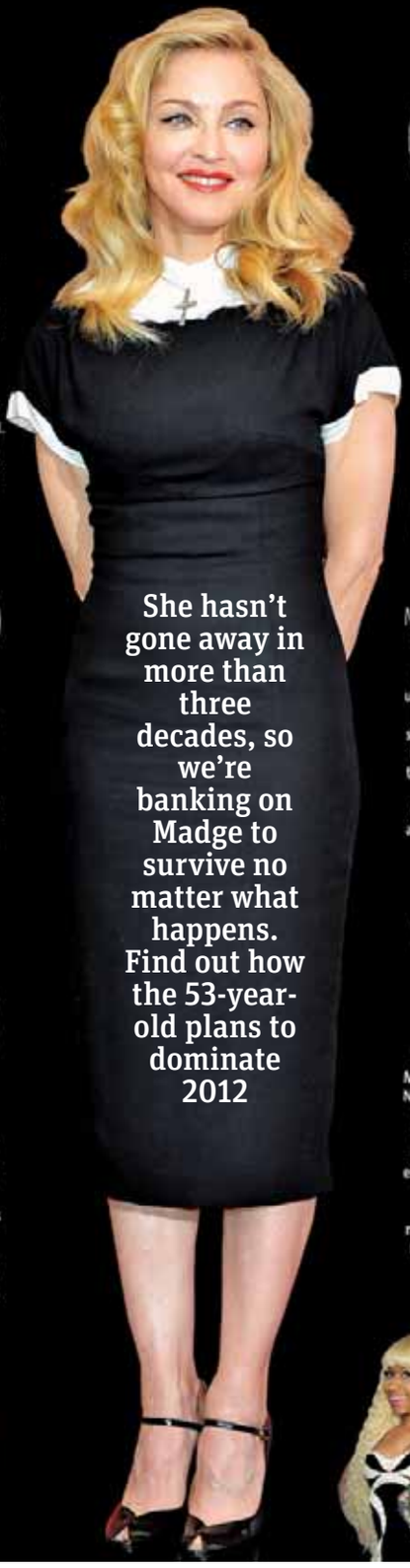
1. Miracle Mile Real-time panic as our hero frantically searches for his girlfriend in L.A. before the bombs drop.

2. The Day After Made for TV, a hyper-realistic look at Lawrence, Kansas after it's hit by a nuke.

3. I Am Legend Will Smith is great in the Charlton Heston role in Omega Man.

100% Madonna's COMEBACK

She hasn't gone away in more than three decades, so we're banking on Madge to survive no matter what happens. Find out how the 53-year-old plans to dominate 2012



20%

A NEW MOVIE

Screened at the Venice Film Festival, "W.E." follows a romantic researcher in the 1990s (Abbie Cornish) delving into the life of Wallis Simpson (Andrea Riseborough), the American divorcee who charmed King Edward VIII. We see both lives lived, though you may want to see none of it: Reviews have been mixed.

30%

A NEW ALBUM

Set for spring, the disc's first singles should be dropping soon. Will it be back to basics, or techno-infused, or or or...for a hint, she's hired some...

9%

NEW SCENT

hat does Madonna smell like? Find out: Her new "expression of me," a perfume called Truth or Dare, is due this year. The scent shares a name with her fashion line, which is still in stores.

30%

NEW GIG

In January, she headlines the halftime show at the Super Bowl, in a performance conceived by the always-understated Cirque Du Soleil. Will cone bras play to mainstream America?

1%

MADONNA-NESS

Somewhere—possibly hidden in the gap between her teeth, or underneath the Kabbalah bracelet—there lies a spirit animal (a Patronus, if you will) that ensures the Material Girl will live forever. The "actual" Madonna died 20 years ago, according to legend.

10%

NEW FRIENDS

To court younger fans, Madonna has hired rapper Nicki Minaj and Sri Lankan superstar M.I.A. on the track "Give Me All Your Love." Minaj, for one, is excited, tweeting: "OH MY F'ingggg Gahhhh!!!!! MADONNA jus kissed me!!!!! On the lips!!!!!!! It felt sooooo good. Soooo soft!!!! *passes out* aaahhhhh!!!!!!!!!"

GETTY IMAGES

The new music stars

▶ King Krule

Escaping the apocalypse? Take some 2012 sounds with you

1 The Dø
Both Ways Open Jaws, the sophomore album by the French duo The Dø, instantly feels classic and contemporary. It is celebratory and it is agitated; it is majestic and it is raw; it is artsy and it is poppy. Basically, it sounds the way you'd expect Lady Gaga to sound if you had only ever seen photos of her.

2 King Krule
If you didn't know that Archy Marshall was a fresh-faced 17-year-old, and you heard his patient beats, sophisticated guitar chords, moody words and his low London voice, you might think he was in his 30s and possibly was the type of character who accompanied Pete Doherty through every stint in rehab. But luckily for us, Marshall has many years ahead of him.

3 Azealia Banks
Imagine if Rihanna really was into sex as much as she sings about. And if Nicki Minaj was into Interpol! Then you might have an idea of the hot, hilarious awesomeness that is the 20-year-old Harlem native Azealia Banks.

4 Michael Kiwanuka
His Tell Me a Tale, sounds at first like a forgotten tune from the 1970s, but once he gets to the chorus you'll know that not only is this a song of the new decade, but it is one that will not be forgotten. ● PAT HEALY

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NEW YEAR, NEW YOU?

THE SMARTPHONES FROM MOBILICITY CAN HELP YOU REACH THE GOALS YOU SET FOR YOURSELF IN THE NEW YEAR — AND SAVE YOU MONEY WHILE YOU DO!

When Gabriele Mascarin made a New Year's resolution last year to lose 15 pounds and tone up, little did she know that her HTC Panache 4G would help her reach her goal.

On the suggestion of a friend, Mascarin downloaded New Years Buzzer (NYB), a free app that encourages you to make changes and stick with them. "It's easy to veer away from your target no matter how disciplined you are," says Mascarin, a 27-year-old fashion designer in Toronto. But getting daily mobile reminders and messages helped her stay focused on her goals. For example, when Mascarin told her smartphone that she went to the gym, avoided a high-fat meal and made it to her hot yoga class, she would receive a congratulatory message at the end of the day.

"I loved getting that little message cheering me on," she says.

When it comes to keeping your New Year's resolution, a smartphone from Mobilicity could make all the difference. Mobilicity has a full range of smartphones at different prices, and right now there are several holiday sales on, too.

Switching to Mobilicity is also an easy way to save money on wireless. With unlimited talk, text and data from Mobilicity, you don't have to worry about paying overages for data usage.

So how can a smartphone help you succeed with your New Year's resolution?

THINSPIRATION

If dropping pounds is a priority, keep your BlackBerry or Android smartphone on a different floor or level so that every time you need to send a text message, check Facebook or answer a call, you have to run a flight of stairs to do so.

Or, watch the pounds melt away as you groove to your favourite dance tunes on the built-in MP3 player on your Nexus S ($349.99 reduced from $499.99 at Mobilicity).

Also, check out The Calorie Counter by FatSecret (Android, BlackBerry), a free app that lets you track food intake, exercise and weight. Or, download My Diet Coach (Android). The app offers motivational images and arguments to help fight food cravings and emotional eating.

GET IN SHAPE

Co-ordinate an early-morning walking group using Google Maps and then post the route on Facebook so that your friends are encouraged to join you.

Or, try the free Endomondo Sports Tracker (Android, BlackBerry). This fitness partner/trainer app gives audio feedback for every kilometre covered, and real-time GPS tracking of time, distance, speed and calories. It also offers real-time pep talks from friends following you live and on a smartphone, like the BlackBerry Curve 9360 (available from Mobilicity for $299.99).

STOP SMOKING

Want to butt out this year? Try Quitnow! (Android, BlackBerry), a free app that tallies the days you haven't lit up, the number of cigarettes not smoked and how much money and years you've saved.

Or, start a Twitter account and tweet about your avoidance strategies every time you crave a cigarette but don't light up.

FIX FINANCES

If your resolution centres on improving your finances, make a note or take video clips of every single purchase you make — the only way to tackle your personal finances is by knowing exactly how much you're spending.

Mint (Android), a free app, can also help. It analyzes your spending and accounts to see if a better credit card or bank account could save you money. It also helps you budget, review your investments and offers alerts that notify you of fees, remind you to pay your bills and advise when you're going over budget.

GET ORGANIZED

Being more productive and organized are common New Year's resolutions. Start by setting alarms on your smartphone well in advance so you're not late — for anything.

Use the calendar on the HTC Panache 4G, for example, to schedule time to work out or get organized.

For BlackBerry users looking to take better control of their time in 2012, there's BlackBerry's Task List. You can also send yourself words of encouragement with BlackBerry's Voice Notes. The BlackBerry Torch 9810 is just one of several BlackBerry smartphones available from Mobilicity that has the voice note function.

Another good idea is to download the BlackTrack-Auto-Productivity Log (BlackBerry). It's a comprehensive phone and email activity report app that lets you follow your billable activity data and see how you are spending your time.

The free Springpad (Android) app saves notes, products and places in one place and organizes them in ways that help you save time and money.

TOP 8 HEALTH & FITNESS APPS ▶

Download some health and fitness apps to keep you on track in the new year! Many apps are free, some you will have to pay for. But once you've made your selection, you can download them anytime with Mobilicity's unlimited data access. And here's some even better news — their 50-per-cent-off regular plans offer has been held over through Boxing Week due to popular demand, so you still have time to take advantage of the savings.

C25K PRO
ANDROID
$1.99

Go from couch potato to running 5K in just nine weeks. This beginners' program allows you to play your own music and has audible reminders for you to switch from running to walking and back. The Pro version supports background mode, music control, and custom sounds. There's also a free version, C25K, which has to be in the foreground to run.

IMAPMY
BLACKBERRY, ANDROID
FREE

This fitness tracking app uses the built-in GPS of your smartphone to track all of your fitness activities, as well as your route! It keeps track of how long you work out, how many calories you burn, and your distance, pace and speed. Android users can share details on Facebook and Twitter for fun and even more motivation!

ADIDAS MICOACH
ANDROID, BLACKBERRY
FREE

Always wanted a personal fitness trainer? Here's one that fits in the palm of your hand! Choose a training plan for your sport and then track your workouts. You can show off your progress on miCoach.com. Real time audible coaching will help keep you on track!

DAILY YOGA FOR TONING ABS
ANDROID
FREE

This abs-building routine is easy to follow with animated demos, voice narration and music that guide you through the 10-minute sequence. The exercise routine itself is based on 16 yoga asanas. There are lots of reminders about proper posture and yogic breathing, too.

YOUR GIFT TO YOURSELF

IF YOU INCLUDED A NEW SMARTPHONE ON YOUR WISH LIST THIS YEAR BUT DIDN'T FIND ONE UNDER THE TREE, WHY NOT TREAT YOURSELF WITH YOUR HOLIDAY GIFT MONEY? VISIT MOBILICITY TODAY AND UPGRADE TO ONE OF THESE GREAT SMARTPHONES.

HTC AMAZE 4G

The all-new HTC Amaze 4G is truly amazing! It has a large, 4.3-inch super LCD display and true HD video viewing; plus touch screen, two cameras and 1.5 GHz dual core processor for smooth, fast web browsing and downloading whether it's songs, photos or videos!

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NEXUS S

The Nexus S features a 1 GHz processor, 16 GB of internal memory and a 4-inch curved glass multi-touch display – packaged in an elegant slim profile that fits perfectly in your hand. With Mobilicity's unlimited data, it's easy and affordable to browse the web, watch videos and play games.

The Nexus S is priced at $349.99 (reduced from $499) at Mobilicity.

BLACKBERRY TORCH 9810

Start your new year with the all-new BlackBerry Torch 9810. It features a full-touch 3.2-inch display, sliding QWERTY keyboard and BlackBerry 7 OS with Liquid Graphics and the latest multimedia features such as HD video. It also has a fast 1.2 GHz processor and 5.0 Megapixel camera with flash. ***At Mobilicity, $499.99***

BLACKBERRY CURVE 9380

Keep in touch with friends and colleagues with the all-new BlackBerry Curve 9380. It features a 3.2-inch full-touch screen with optical trackpad for great navigation. This smartphone also has a 5.0 Megapixel camera with video recording capabilities. ***At Mobilicity, $299.99.***

HTC PANACHE 4G

The powerful HTC Panache 4G features the best of style, function and innovation with the powerful Android 2.3 operating system and HTC Sense. It has interactive camera effects, GPS navigation and can turn into a portable Wi-Fi hotspot. ***At Mobilicity, $299.99 (reduced from $499).***

NOKIA 500

The Nokia 500 is a mid-range smartphone that features a fast 1 GHz processor and a 3.2-inch touchscreen display with 640 x 360 pixel screen resolution and a QWERTY keyboard. With Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity, it's the perfect smartphone for staying connected with all your friends. ***On sale for $99.99 for a limited time at Mobilicity (reduced from $169.99).***

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Now you can do a quick five- to 10-minute cardio workout anywhere and anytime. This app provides daily cardio routines demonstrated by a certified personal trainer. The routine's simple interface, complete with video and timer, lets you follow along easily.

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Keep track of your heart rate while you exercise with your smartphone. All you have to do is place your finger gently over the camera and hold it steady for at least 10 seconds. Then your heart rate is shown on the display.

MULTI REPS

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HEALTHY RECIPES SPARK RECIPES - ANDROID, BLACKBERRY - FREE

Looking to lose weight or just make healthier eating choices in general? The Healthy Recipes – Spark Recipes app lets you browse through thousands of delicious choices. Each recipe provides easy how-to instructions as well as how many calories, fat and other nutrients are in a serving.

LOSE IT

ANDROID
FREE

Record what you eat and how much you exercise every day at Loseit.com with this app. Then, earn badges to recognize your success and add friends for support and motivation. The odds of you succeeding are high – more than 85 percent of active Lose it users have lost weight!

Is that your final answer?

It may not be the end of the world ... yet, but we asked a few celebrities what they'd do if it was

WIZ KHALIFA
RAPPER

What is the last song you'll sing in the shower?
Save The Children by Marvin Gaye

What is the last movie you'll watch and with whom?
The Notebook with Amber.

What is the one luxury item you'll bring with you to the New World?
My laptop.

Who is the one fellow celebrity with whom you'll want to travel to the New World?
Amber Rose.

PAT HEALY

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

JAMIE BELL
ACTOR

What is your last meal?
It would definitely be a meat dish. I love meat. It's so bad, but damn, it's pretty good. Maybe just cook a whole cow. Actually, probably a steak au poivre or steak frites.

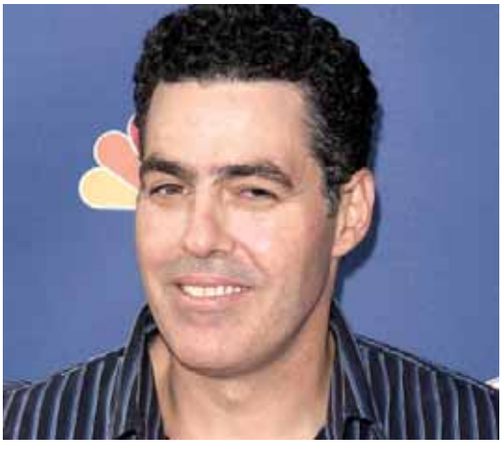
What is the last song you'll sing in the shower?
Maybe Let it Be. Maybe a Pink Floyd song? Or you could go out on something completely ironic like Always Look on the Bright Side of Life.

What is the last movie you'll watch?
I would love to say something that was really influential, about the goodness of humanity, but it would probably be Jurassic Park, honestly.

What is the one luxury item you'll bring with you to the New World?
The Complete Works of Shakespeare.

Who is the one fellow celebrity with whom you'll want to travel to the New World?
Andy Serkis, for sure. I love that man. I genuinely love him.

RICHARD CROUSE



ADAM CAROLLA
COMEDIAN

What is your last meal?
I'd go to the busiest restaurant, whose kitchen was most backed up and then I would change my order three or four times. I'd stretch it out. I'd eat lobsters raised on Snickers bars then dipped in a buttermilk substance mixed with tempura sauce and then deep-fried. With heroin sprinkled on it.

What is the last song you'll sing in the shower?
There's two ways you can go: you can go with one of my favourites like John Hiatt or Elvis Costello and hear something you really want to hear. Or, a better approach would be to take a horrible song like Man-eater by Hall and Oates and want to die.

What is the last movie you'll watch and with whom?
I would pick a long movie. There's a theme here, I want to stretch it out. I'd watch Goodfellas with Joe Pesci and make sure he got drunk and have him re-enact his scenes. I'd have Ray Liotta there too and make them do their crazy laughs for me.

What is the one luxury item you'll bring with you to the New World?
Wait a minute; this is stretching the boundaries of reality. You can't transport items. You're dead, there's no taking anything with you.

Who is the one fellow celebrity with whom you'll want to travel to the New World?
The world is ending. That's it. You're done.

PAT HEALY

MINDY KALING
WRITER, PRODUCER, ACTRESS

What would your last meal be?
My last meal would probably be Ethiopian food, my favourite kind of food ... it's super heavy and I love it.

What would the last song you'd sing in the shower be?
Countdown by Beyoncé.

What is the last movie you'd watch and with whom?
The last movie I would watch would be You've Got Mail and I'd watch it with my mom.

What's one luxury item you'd bring with you to the new world?
In the post apocalyptical world where it's like Cormac McCarthy's The Road and everyone is dirty and disgusting, I'd bring a Judith Lieber clutch, like in my rags.

One celebrity you'd want to travel with to the new world?
Aaron Sorkin

PAT HEALY

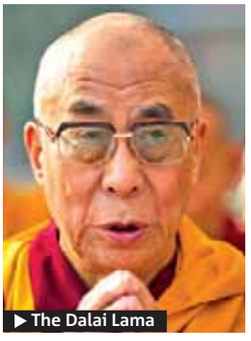
We asked our Metro Life Panel which celebrity they would want to spend their last 24 hours on earth with
Some answers were predictable — Pamela Anderson — and others took us by surprise (your mom? Really?)

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Your last Date night

Angelina Jolie

Leonardo DiCaprio


The Dalai Lama

Brad Pitt

Oprah Winfrey

Ryan Reynolds

Who else?

- **Chuck Norris** If anyone's going to make it through the apocalypse, it's Chuck.
- **Dr. Oz** He'd know just what to do and say to make "everything right."
- **Ellen DeGeneres** I wanna go out laughing and happy.
- **Jann Arden** I'd love to sit and drink wine with her and hear her talk.
- **Keanu Reeves** He's boring enough that I would nod off first.
- **Leonard Cohen** He seems like an interesting man with an interesting mind.

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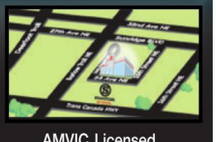

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The 2012 tech trends

If the Terminator series proves right (and who doubts it?) technology may not be our friend for much longer, so embrace it now Here's our look into the near future (no hoverboards, yet) As ever, fighting games rule

1 Grand Theft Auto V

This is going to be huge. Like, Avatar-huge: The last Grand Theft Auto was the biggest video game launch of its time, and overall, the series has moved more than 124 million copies. V is set in a warped version of Los Angeles, called Los Santos, and stars a family man pulled back into a world of crime. Horrific crime. Previous installments have been blamed for inciting real-life violence. Expect at least a mob … at the video game store. No release date yet.

2 Windows 8: Touch

The touch screen revolution comes to the PC, as Microsoft's rumored new OS will support finger-clicking icons.

The company could use the buzz.

In the cool wars, they've lost to Apple for decades.

3 Mass Effect 3

An intergalactic combat game, Mass Effect has never had the cachet of Call of Duty — in other words, dads haven't heard of it. But it's a big deal to gamers. The final chapter continues Commander Shepard's battle against the evil Reaers. Released March 9. SAM CASTONE

4 Playstation Vita

Could this be the iPhone killer? With 3G mobile support and social networking capability, the Vita (means "life" in Latin) is more than a portable video game player. But it is that too: titles such as Uncharted: Golden Abyss and Call of Duty will be available near launch. Some can be played via touch screen. Released in Europe and North America in February.

5 Wii U

The original Wii — with joysticks that looked like nunchucks and family-friendly titles — brought Nintendo back to the forefront of gaming, although the Xbox Kinect (no joystick required) later stole the spotlight. The Wii U does require a controller — but it's got a touch screen, which means games can be played on the television or in your hand. Revolutionary, or too complicated? Find out while playing LEGO City Stories or a new Pimkin. No release date yet.

6 The Amazing Spider-Man

Tied into this summer's movie reboot, this Activision title allows you to venture all over the big city, slinging webs at anyone — a significant change from previous Spidey games where you were stuck on one track. Also a bonus: A writer from Battlestar Galactica helped pen the plot.

7 iPad 3

Rumors have swirled about this since the debut of the iPad 2 back in March: Will it have a retina display (with an amazingly crisp resolution)? Can you control it with a gesture — no touching required? Will there be a holographic Siri? Who knows! But talking about it will be a trend in itself. No release date yet. The photo below is fake, by the way. Gotcha!

8 A new Angry Birds

The original topped the 2011 charts as the most downloaded paid-for iTunes app. We're hoping a new edition launches in 2012, because — hold on one second. I'm almost past level 19. No release date yet.

9 A new Halo

To paraphrase Sgt. Johnson from the first Halo: "I don't care if it's God's own anti-son-of-a-bitch machine, or a giant hoola hoop," we want this sequel if it comes. For now, it's just a rumor.

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3 life

5 survival skills your mother didn't teach you

It's the end of days, you're alone and you're going to need a few skills to survive Here's what you need to know to cope with an apocalypse

ELISHA DACEY
METRO WINNIPEG

JENNA CUMBERS/METRO WINNIPEG

▶ Bored during the apocalypse? Teach yourself to paint.

How to sew a button

Tools: needle, thread, scissors

Put the thread into the eye of the needle. (Tip: Lick the end of the thread to give it some strength.) Pull the thread through the needle until there is an equal length of thread on both sides. Tie the ends together in a big knot. Now position the button on the fabric. Push the needle up through the fabric, behind the button, and up through the button hole. Pull the thread all the way through. Push the needle through a different hole in the button and pull the thread through. Repeat several times until the button is secure. On the backside of the fabric, run the needle through your awkward stitching several times to tie off the thread.

How to cut down a tree

Tools: chainsaw, rope, ladder

Use the ladder to tie a rope to the top of the tree, or as high as you can get it. Cut a notch (with the chainsaw, duh) that goes more than halfway through the tree, on the side of the tree you want it to fall on. Then cut downward on the other side, toward the notch you just created. When you get close to the notch, it should start to fall. If it doesn't, pull the rope. Carefully. If it does start to fall, get out of the way, as the butt of the tree can kick back and smack you.

How to de-bone a fish

Tools: sharp knife, tweezers

Place clean fish on its side. Cut the fish just behind the gill plate until the blade hits the fish's backbone. Make sure your knife is flat and parallel to the cutting surface. Slice down the length of the backbone right to the tail. Repeat on the other side. Remove the backbone. Then slice between the rib bones into the meat of the fish and pull the bones out. Use tweezers to clasp onto the remaining bones and pull them out. Note: Do not later use these tweezers for your eyebrows.

How to start a fire using ice

Tools: foil, clear water, knife

Shape a piece of foil into a bowl. Fill it with about 5 cm of water. Wait for it to freeze. Make a nest of tinder for later. Using a pocket knife, shape the ice into a lens shape. (Remember, lenses are thicker in the middle and narrower around the edges.) Polish your lens with your bare hands (the heat will help the lens become nice and smooth). Angle the lens toward the sun and focus the light on the tinder nest. Be patient…. Fire!

How to be alone

Chances are, you're by yourself. How do you not go crazy until you find other people? Some suggestions: Write a story or some poetry. Learn something new, like guitar. There must be plenty of guitars and Guitar for Dummies books around. Read. There will be other books near the guitar book. Listen to music, assuming there's electricity. Sing, dance, paint, do puzzles. Keeping your mind occupied is key.

Winter storms

Here's what to do during a power outage:
- Turn off appliances to avoid a power surge when power is restored.
- Do not touch electrical wires, appliances or devices.
- Check for gas leaks and turn the valves off if you find one.
- Prepare an inventory of what has been lost or damaged.

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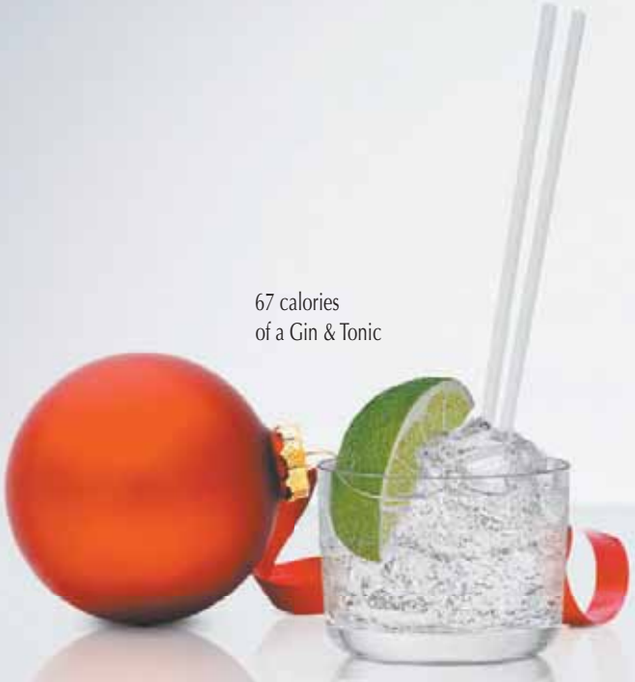

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You, 12 months from now

In one year's time, we'll have become more 'sharing and caring,' the world's top trend-spotters tell Metro
We'll share songs, docs and files without owning them, and we'll care more about where our food comes from

ANTHONY JOHNSTON
METRO WORLD NEWS

Computing on the cloud, holidaying on a farm and interacting with talking billboards are among the top things we'll be doing in 2012, the world's leading trends potters tell Metro.

"The new year will be a portrait of contrasts — great new techno-breakthroughs and a rush toward embracing anything local, including crafts and foods," says Marian Salzman, president of Euro RSCG Worldwide PR.

Surfin' in the 'cloud'

Cloud computing will be the most talked-about trend over the next year.

"Twelve months from now, most people under 40 will be logging into a virtual file cabinet to pick up your work assignment or your shopping list," Salzman tells Metro.

"There are obvious privacy issues that come with that," says Ann Mack, director of trend-spotting at global advertising agency JWT. "But overall, people are moving toward 'access over ownership.' Already you can access any song you like online without actually owning it."

Shop ethical: There's an app for that

Ethical shopping is set to rise, according to Salzman, with more and more people concerned about how their food products are sourced — and they're investigating with their smartphones.

One smartphone app — GoodGuide — allows shoppers to scan a product with their phone camera and find out how ethically responsible the food company behind the product is.

"Into the new year, our smartphone will increasingly become our companion to what kind of cheese we'll buy; we can find out if it was made in that trustworthy farm," Salzman says.

The futurologist believes an overall citizen-led drive to target corporate responsibility is behind this. "On a macro level, it's due to the general malaise in society that's still around today. Wanting a sense of control in this chaos is a personal trigger," Salzman adds.

But we won't just be acting ethical in the supermarket aisles. Salzman predicts a rise in eco-tourism and spending vacation time volunteering at farms over the next year.

"Don't be surprised if families take their urban/suburban gardens one step further by going on 'farmcations,'" she says. "Think staying at sustainable farms where families can learn to grow their own foods in a nod to 2012 survivalist fervor and to the need to know what they're eating and to pay less for healthy food."

Other trends

- **Eco-cycology.** We're seeking a more sustainable lifestyle — and we want the same from the brands we buy. Already Nike and Dell have programs where they take back old items from customers and recycle the material to use in new products.
- **Depression-era chic.** Perhaps as a nod to our economic climate, designers, from Gucci to Roberto Cavalli, showed swingy flapper dresses, complete with drop waists, deco touches and Zelda Fitzgerald as a muse.
- **Trading in.** With wage freezes we all need some ways to get a bit of extra cash. 'Recommerce' is the new buying where tech-savvy consumers are re-selling or trading in old buys. Across the world, companies are already offering trade-in programs.

2012 trend: flapper dress

SOURCES: MARIAN SALZMAN, TRENDWATCHING.COM

MIA KORAB/METRO WORLD NEWS

You might vacation on a sustainable farm.
Life will revolve around touchpads a lot more.
The cloud — a virtual file cabinet — will hold your files and music.
People will want to know where their food comes from.

Say hi to a billboard

Our lives will revolve even more than they already do around touchpad devices, whether it's ordering in a restaurant or shopping in a department store.

Barney's department store in New York already boasts restaurant tables fitted with touchscreens; diners can digitally order their meal, then browse through the store's catalogue.

And we'll be "talking" to billboards, too: "Siri and other voice recognition devices are a big hitter now, but as people will get used to this phenomenon, we could be interacting with a talking billboard," Mack told Metro.

"Already in Japan, they have billboards that can detect with 90 per cent accuracy whether the passerby is male or female, and then serve up an ad accordingly.

"Some people will say this is all straight out of [futuristic sci-fi movie] Minority Report, but in reality this is going to happen."

Get creative with canned food

Whether you like buying in bulk or you're preparing for a disaster, you likely have a stash of canned goods gathering dust in your pantry Emily Richards explains how to turn those staples into easy, tasty meals

ALL PHOTOS BY EMILY RICHARDS

Drink of the week

Hot Chocolate Mix

- 1 cup (250 mL) instant skim milk powder
- ⅔ cup (150 mL) granulated sugar
- ½ cup (125 mL) unsweetened cocoa powder

In jar, stir together milk powder, sugar and cocoa powder until well combined. Store for up to 2 months. When ready to make 1 mug of hot chocolate, bring about 1 cup (250 mL) of water to boil and whisk in 1/4 cup (60 mL) of the hot chocolate mix until smooth.

Tip: You can find instant skim milk powder at bulk and health food stores.

EMILY RICHARDS

DINNER EXPRESS

EMILY RICHARDS
FOOD@METRONEWS.CA

The flavour and spice level in this one-pot meal will knock your socks off!

If you're not a fan of heat and spice, simply use half the package of paste. To change up the flavour, look for other paste or sauce packages such as peanut sauce for a Thai-inspired dish.

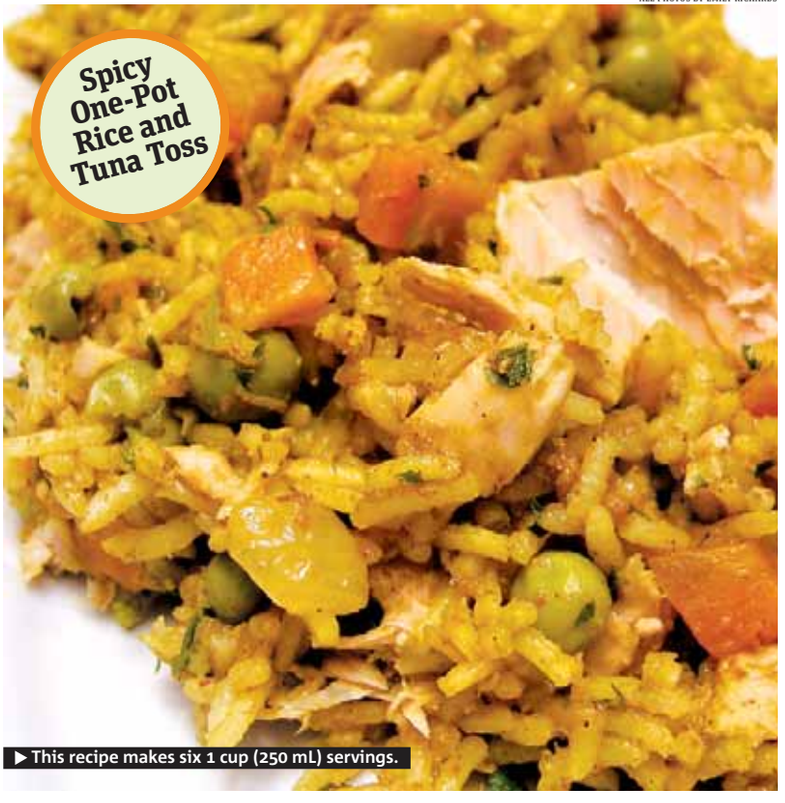
Ingredients:

- 1 can (540 mL/19 oz) cooked diced potatoes, drained well
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 2 tsp (10 mL) dried parsley leaves
- 1 tsp (5 mL) dried thyme leaves
- ¼ tsp (1 mL) cayenne
- 1 can (398 mL/14 oz) creamed corn
- 1 can (370 mL) 2% evaporated milk
- 1 can (284 mL/10 oz) vegetable broth
- 1 ¼ cups (300 mL) water

Preparation:

1. In saucepan, heat oil over medium heat and cook onion for about 3 minutes or until softened. Stir in paste and rice until well coated. Add water; bring to the boil.
2. Cover and reduce heat to low and cook for about 10 minutes or until water is absorbed and rice is fluffy. Stir in vegetables, tuna and parsley and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes before serving.

EMILY RICHARDS IS A PROFESSIONAL HOME ECONOMIST, COOKBOOK AUTHOR & TV CELEBRITY CHEF. FOR MORE, VISIT EMILYRICHARDSCOOKS.CA



▶ This recipe makes six 1 cup (250 mL) servings.

Stovetop Fruit with Dumplings

▶ Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Think all desserts need an oven and a whole lot of steps? Think again This Stovetop Fruit with Dumplings only takes two steps to make and requires seven staple ingredients — including rum

You can make a simple dessert on a stovetop or even over a fire! This quick and tasty dessert will make any day seem brighter.

EMILY RICHARDS

Ingredients:

- 1 can (796 mL/28 oz) mixed fruit with cherries in light syrup
- ¼ cup (60 mL) each dried cranberries and chopped dried apricots
- 2 tbsp (30 mL) rum
- ½ tsp (2 mL) ground cinnamon
- 1 ¼ cups (300 mL) biscuit mix
- ⅔ cup (150 mL) evaporated milk
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla extract

Preparation:

1. Pour fruit into small shallow saucepan and stir in cranberries, apricots, rum and cinnamon. Bring to a gentle simmer over medium heat.
2. In a bowl, stir biscuit mix with milk and vanilla until combined. Dollop 6 spoonfuls over top of fruit mixture; cover and cook for about 10 minutes or until biscuit is cooked through and no longer wet.

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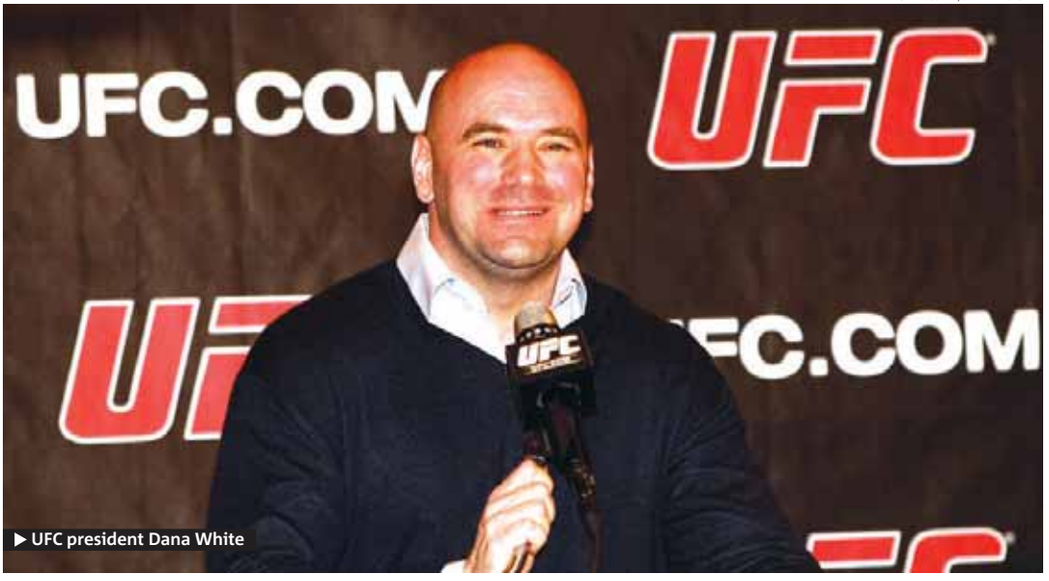
4 sports

New level for a new era

Provided we're still here, sports could get a lot wackier beyond 2012

MICHAEL COHEN/GETTY IMAGES FILE



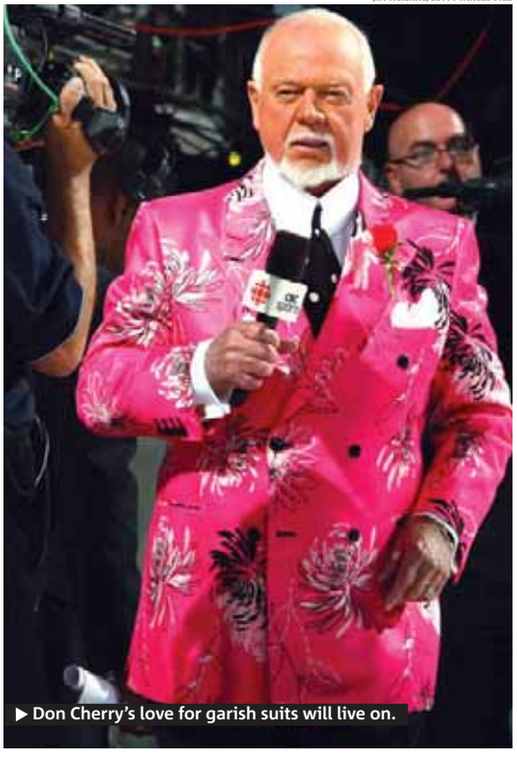
▶ UFC president Dana White

Ask anyone from a previous generation and they'll surely enlighten you as to how "sports ain't what they used to be." Until the end of 2012 those were just the crowings of the bewildered and beleaguered. Fans of the future, know *they* will have a valid claim…

2037: With ratings on the decline due to the influx of violent and gambling reality shows ("Monkey Knife Fight"; "Trillion Dollar Deficit Coin-Flip"; "Casino vs. Robosaurus"; "Who Has The Toughest Automatic Dishwasher…Literally?"), the now-completely hairless UFC president Dana White melds Mixed Martial Arts with Texas Hold 'Em: As Real A Semi-Bluff As It Gets!

2049: After locking out its players for a combined 15th time this century, many NBA and NFL players head back to college to finish their degrees (and to take advantage of the fact the NCAA is now paying its "amateur" athletes upwards of $2 million a semester, along with all-you-can-sit tattoos). The pros arrive to find the March Madness tournament has ballooned to 16,388 schools (14 rounds plus two play-in games) and begins the previous June. Football still rebuffs a playoff system, making all but one of the 78 bowls utterly inane. (Though the

JIM MCISAAC/GETTY IMAGES FILE



▶ Don Cherry's love for garish suits will live on.

Visa Halftime Show sponsored by Doritos at the Meineke Car Care Bowl presented by Fannie Mae would have been great if it wasn't for all the commercials.)

2062: Pogs!

2087: Proving Darwin's theory correct, decades of relentless texting has led to the thumb being the strongest appendage on most humans. What started with Pro Thumb Wrestling ("It's totally fake!") evolves into the Thumb Olympics. Events include synchronized scrolling and the modern phalangeathalon. Most contestants aren't very polished.

2112: In an ongoing effort to reduce concussions, the NHL, which at last count had expanded to 78 teams, finally arrives at a "solution" to head shots by boiling the game down to a 99-shot per team shootout (with the provisos that no player can skate beyond the hashmarks for fear of running into the goalie and any shot above the waist results in a lifetime ban.) Coaches give themselves concussions from shaking their heads. Don Cherry's ghost, drawn back from the abyss every Saturday night with the promise of a new garish suit, calls Gary Bettman IV a joke. Of course, fighting is still allowed … how else to keep up with Ultimate Poker?

EDWARD FRASER/FOR METRO

FRANK MICELOTTA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

▶ Thumb wars will be the sports battlefields of the future.

Sports in brief

FOR THE LATEST SPORTS NEWS, INCLUDING THE TORONTO RAPTORS' BOXING DAY SEASON OPENER AGAINST THE CAVALIERS IN CLEVELAND, VISIT METRONEWS.CA.

Scan code for more sports.

3 SPORTS SIGNS OF APOCALYPSE

GIVING BACK

Professional athletes realize just how overpaid they actually are and decide en masse to take a 50 per cent pay cut, which in turn sees ticket prices cut in half allowing middle class families to again cheer on home teams at arenas.

DROUGHT ENDS

Toronto's famed Yonge Street is lined for miles with cheering fans as the city's beloved Maple Leafs do the unthinkable and win the Stanley Cup.

CFL OPENS A CAN

The Canadian Football League, in an attempt to boost sluggish TV ratings and ticket sales, decides to have a one-round MMA fight between opposing players to determine who gets first possession in games.

PHILIP CROUCHER

Where do we go from here?

Metro guest columnist Greg Downs looks at how pro sports could evolve and the future of athletic culture

Equality in dressing rooms: If the world of sports is the last mainstream closet, then the next 50 years will open doors.

There is a short history of openly gay athletes, mainly because of the stigma athletes who come out face.

However the mentality is set to change in locker rooms and front offices around North America.

The NFL, largely considered to be the toughest arena to be a gay athlete, wrote legislation into the new collective bargaining agreement, barring any discrimination based on sexual orientation.

It's a sign of things to come when high-profile, truculent personalities such as Brian Burke voice their concerns and walk in the Gay Pride Parade.

New national sport: Canada's national sport will be forced to take a back seat as concussions, and changing population push soccer to the forefront of the Canadian sporting landscape.

According to Stats Canada by 2031 as much as 28 per cent of the population will be of foreign birth, bringing the world's most popular game with them.

"As concussion information develops, and head injuries become more prevalent in contact sports, soccer will become the safer alternative."

Toronto FC and the Vancouver Whitecaps are already among the MLS leaders in attendance and Canada's third franchise, the Montreal Impact, will join this summer.

As concussion information develops, and head injuries become more prevalent in contact sports, soccer will become the safer alternative.

International Hockey League: With many NBA, and NHL markets struggling to keep up with the growing player salary demands, lure of foreign markets will spawn international leagues.

ABELIMAGES/GETTY IMAGES FILE

▶ Ashtone Morgan, centre, waves to Toronto FC fans at BMO field in Toronto last October.

The money has already been proven to exist.

In 2010 SKA Saint Petersburg offered Ilya Kovalchuk the same $100 million deal as the one he signed with the New Jersey Devils, a sum many NHL clubs couldn't afford.

NBA player Deron Williams, like many pro basketball players, signed a big deal overseas (one-year, $5 million) during the recent lockout.

His number was even retired after just 15 games.

Pay to play: In the next half century college and university athletes will lose their amateur status.

While organizations like the NCAA have fought and fined to keep players from making money, the pressure on big schools to recruit will force the league to adapt.

There's just too much money on the line. Both BCS championship teams, LSU and Alabama will receive $18 million for playing the biggest college game of the season.

Many schools and boosters have already shown the willingness to throw large sums of cash at high school players and it will be impossible for the NCAA to stop it.

Front court — Front office: Elite athletes will elevate from highly paid stars, to player/owners as teams attempt to lure them to their city.

Owners routinely hand over power of their teams to stars, and based on current contracts, ownership is next. Albert Pujols was handed a $252 million contract this month by the L.A. Angels. It's a deal worth more than the amount owner Art Moreno paid for the team ($181 million in 2003). Alexander Ovechkin's 13 year $124 million deal is only $10 million shy of Forbes' estimated worth of the Phoenix Coyotes franchise.

GREG DOWNS/FOR METRO

Frontline NHLers going into a new era

JIM REYNO
@METRONEWS.CA
METRO CANADA IN LONDON, ONT.

GETTY IMAGES FILE

▶ From left, Zdeno Chara, Erik Karlsson, Claude Giroux, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Milan Lucic and Marc-Andre Fleury.

My starting six NHLers to take into the new world are based on a number of factors: Statistics, age, leadership, and what I call "winningness" — a combination of toughness, heart and ability to hoist Lord Stanley's cup.

Centre — In the absence of a healthy Sidney Crosby, I like Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. Not much of a track record in the NHL, but he's off to a great start in Edmonton and he carries himself like a veteran. Pretty impressive 18-year-old guy, on and off the ice.

Left wing — Milan Lucic. I don't care if he's dead last in the league in scoring and minus a million in the regular season — when it's crunch time, he crunches. Lucic is the quintessential power-forward. Fearless and intimidating at six-foot-four and 220 pounds, this 23-year-old would create space up front for Nugent-Hopkins and this next guy.

Right wing — Claude Giroux. This 23-year-old has improved every season in the NHL. He's quick, a heady passer, and still has a sniper's eye for the net. And although he hasn't won a cup yet, he's clutch: Giroux is among the league leaders in game-winning goals — not to mention points. Hopefully, we'll see Sid and Claude concussion free soon — lighting it up for Canada on the same line at the next Olympics.

Defence — Zdeno Chara. Massive, in every sense of the word. Everyone knows about his booming slapshot and mean streak, but at six-foot-nine and 255 pounds, he covers half of the defensive zone just by standing there. Yes he's 34, but if Tony Bennett can have a No. 1 album at age 85, I can have Chara on my blue-line for a few years in the new world.

Defence — Erik Karlsson. With Big Z doing the heavy-lifting defensively, the slick-passing, smooth-skating Karlsson would be free to roam. My transition game wouldn't stall with this guy: Karlsson moves the puck quickly and effectively. This 21-year-old Swede will be quarterbacking the Senators power play for years to come.

Goal — Tough one. Among the goaltending leaders, I either see guys approaching the end of their careers or guys who haven't proven it over the long haul. Maybe Marc-Andre Fleury? Hitting his prime at age 27, already won a cup ... yeah, I'll go

Mayan Calendar Puzzle

Many are dreading 2012, as it supposedly means dark days are ahead as foretold by the Mayan calendar. Wrong! The truth is, it's just the end of a cycle of the Mayan calendar. To the Mayans, that was a time to celebrate. So, 2012 is more like a brand new day rather than an end of days. 2012 is going to be just fine.

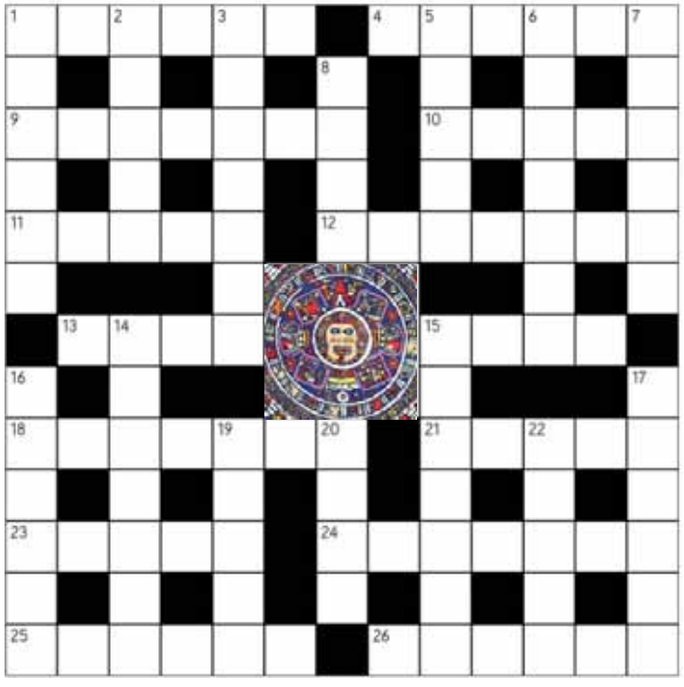
LARRY HUMBER

Across

1 The Mayan Calendar is known as the Maya ___ Round (a word meaning holy)
4 The Maya had ___ day names, nearly three times as many as we have
9 McHattie of Immortals and the disaster film 2012
10 What the Maya called day 19; it means rain storm (it's also a kind of canoe if you change the middle letter)
11 If things go as some say in 2012, we'll be needing more than ___ salts to cure our ills
12 Predominantly Muslim nation in West Africa
13 A New Testament book
15 Scarlett O'Hara's home
18 Shake violently
21 Basketball's "Shaq"
23 Information fed into a computer
24 Adopts: 2 wds.
25 John ___ played writer Jackson Curtis in 2012
26 ___ & Demons was a Dan Brown book and later a film starring Tom Hanks

Down

1 In the film 2012, Lilly is the ___ of Noah (they're Curtis's kids)
2 Maia Chiburdanidze was women's world ___ champ
3 Digs up or brings to light
5 Rouse from sleep
6 One who's into astrology, say: 2 wds.
7 Country folk
8 Terminates
14 The Mayan calendar is used to this day in this part of Mexico (it's an anagram of APHASIC)
15 The Mayan calendar is known to scholars as the ___ (the answer is close in spelling to The Lord of the Rings author)
16 Crazy person
17 Symbolic figures as found in the Mayan calendar
19 The ___ calendar was an adaptation of the Mayan
20 Erodes, ___ away
22 Come as a result



Solution

ACROSS
1. SACRED, 4. TWENTY, 9. STEPHEN, 10. KAWAK, 11. EPSOM, 12. SENEGAL, 13. ACTS, 15. TARA, 18. AGITATE, 21. O'NEAL, 23. INPUT, 24. TAKES UP, 25. CUSACK and 26. ANGELS

DOWN
1. SISTER, 2. CHESS, 3. EXHUMES, 5. WAKEN, 6. NEW AGER, 7. YOKELS, 8. ENDS, 14. CHIAPAS, 15. TZOLKIN, 16. MANIAC, 17. GLYPHS, 19. AZTEC, 20. EATS and 22. ENSUE

NOTE: The solutions for the Dec. 24th crossword and Sudoku will appear in the Jan. 3 issue of Metro. If you can't wait until then, go to metronews.ca for the answers.

Numerology

Numerology offers a personality and lifestyle profile that can help unlock the mysteries of the past, present and future. Numbers help predict outcomes — so you can enhance relationships, career and overall living!

Number One

Celebrate: You will inspire people willing to hear your point of view. Not only will they be impressed with your vision, but they will tell others about you.
Watch out for: Not just one, but many people will confront you with matters of the heart. If you are not interested, then be honest.

Number Two

Celebrate: Aggressive folks who have rattled your chain in the past will ask you for forgiveness. Your career will pick up tenfold, so be ready to take on new responsibilities and exciting experiences.
Watch out for: Try not to push things. If it does not fit, do not force it. Relax and let things go.

Number Three

Celebrate: You have done things for people that others would not think of doing. This year coworkers, friends and family will show their gratitude for your kindness.
Watch out for: Your loyalty will be questioned two times in 2012; however, as long as you remain calm and cool, your maturity will shine through.

Number Four

Celebrate : Folks will come to you throughout the year. They will use you as a distraction from their woes. Do not shun them. Make money from it, or least earn good karma.
Watch out for: All will be merry for the first part of the year, but in mid-2012 you need to be watchful of people who say they love you, but hurt you most.

Number Five

Celebrate: Your creative side will bubble over in 2012. Business, career, love and spiritual ideas you have been putting off will now ignite and you will soar to new heights.
Watch out for: People with good intentions will try to persuade you not to take a chance. Hear their advice, but ultimately listen to your heart and go with your intuition.

How it works

- It starts with your birth date — month, day, year.
- Break down your numbers to a single digit.
- For example, say you were born on Dec. 20, 1971. December is the 12th month, so break the month down: 1+2 = 3
- The 20th day — break it down: 2+0 = 2
- The year 1971 — break it down: 1+9+7+1 = 18. Break it down again to a single digit: 1+8 = 9
- Now add up all three final numbers: 3+2+9 = 14
- Break 14 down and your final answer is 1+4 = 5
- You are a number 5

Number Six

Celebrate: In 2012 smiling and laughing will have more of an affect on your life than you could ever imagine. Folks may test you many times and in many ways, but you will pass them all.
Watch out for: Taking things personally will only cause stress. When others try to dish discomfort, deflect it by saying to yourself: "I am peaceful, and peace is with me."

Number Seven

Celebrate: Say what is on your mind, and do not hesitate to do what you feel. As long as it does not hurt anybody, do as you like and live how you want.
Watch out for: Acquaintances may judge you incorrectly. But do not worry, because in the first quarter of 2012 they will learn to appreciate your character and cherish your friendship.

Number Eight

Celebrate: Somebody between the ages of 21 and 35 will praise your name, and if they do this at work, your income will increase sooner rather than later.
Watch out for: Do not answer any questions that will turn into deeper questions. Getting into the nitty gritty of things is not necessary.

Number Nine

Celebrate: If somebody owes you money, you can look forward to getting some of it back, and just when you need it most.
Watch out for: Focus on your health, especially if you do not have the best of health right now.

A SYNDICATED ASTROLOGIST, CERISE FAIRFAX IS PUBLISHED IN VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES. SHE IS ALSO A LIFE COACH COUNSELOR. CHECK HER OUT AT CERISEFAIRFAX.COM

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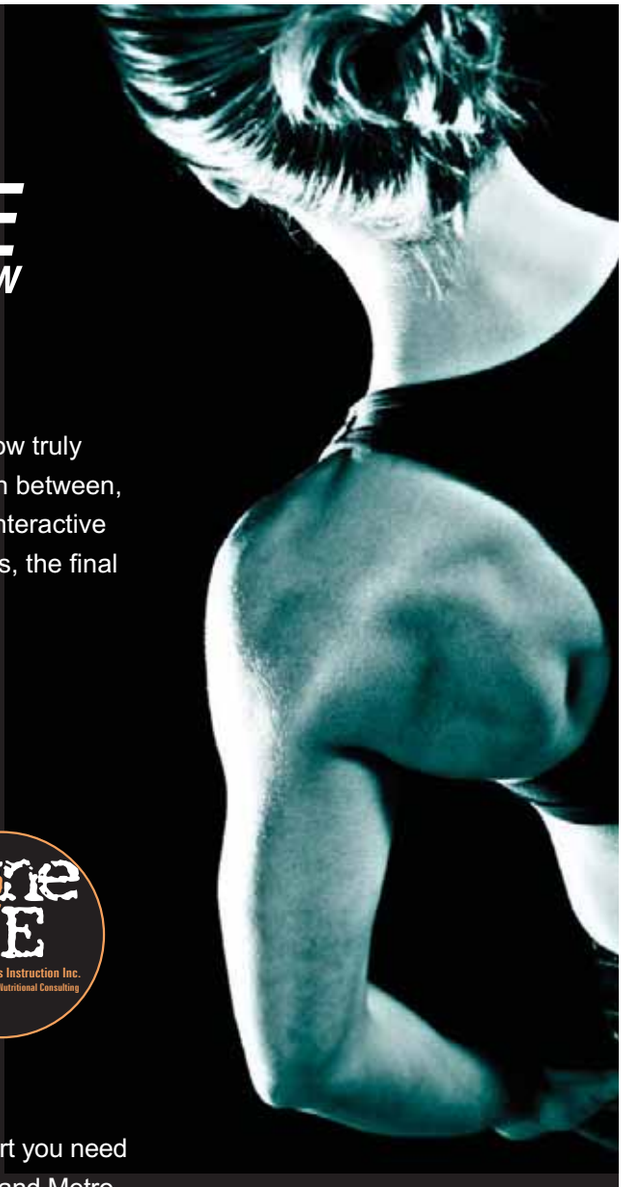

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